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# 10-point charter to show BN is listening

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BARISAN Nasional holds its convention tomorrow.

A member of the secretariat said the idea of conducting proceedings behind closed doors was to encourage no-holds-barred discussions among family members and, therefore, should be used wisely.

"They can even be fiery with the understanding that there is goodwill and in the spirit of BN," the official said.

Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak wants to see support return to the coalition, or else he would not repeatedly warn that voters will end BN rule if it does not change or reform in time for the next general election.

He has pushed for initiatives to re-brand BN and introduced new policies that appear to be well-received by the people since taking office last year.

Tomorrow, Najib will unveil a 10-point BN charter — one which touches on, among other things, the need to move forward, transform economically and uphold religious freedom, and places high hopes that component parties would adhere to it.

Leaders of component parties will speak on various issues at the convention, from national unity, racial and religious politics and education to law and order, economic transformation and putting the interests of the people first.

Beyond the convention's work flow, BN watchers and the voters will be screening media reports on the proceedings to discern the key messages on change. For, this convention is held amid speculation that a snap election could be held well ahead of the April 2013 general election deadline.

Hence, the election element of the convention will be pronounced.

To be attended by 2,100 delegates, the convention is expected to strengthen the coalition ahead of the next general election. This is especially so with the introduction of direct membership — associate members, affiliate members, Friends of BN and Kelab Rakan Muda BN.

Direct membership refers to those (individuals and non-governmental organisations) who are not members of any BN component party but support the coalition's ideology and principles.

Talks on direct membership first began following a BN supreme council meeting in February when a committee was formed to look into

amendments to the BN constitution.

Universiti Utara Malaysia International Studies programme chairman Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani believes that direct membership will work to BN's advantage in getting the support of the voters.

"There are some individuals who fight for certain causes but are not interested in joining any political parties. They can opt to air their grouses through the platform provided by BN."

"Through this, BN will be championing more issues faced by the people. This would surely go

down well with the voters and, in a way, could drive them to support the coalition in the next general election.

Indeed, Najib had said recently that direct membership would make the coalition more inclusive. It would also help BN touch base with the young through Kelab Rakan Muda BN, an outreach programme aimed at youths between the ages of 18 and 21.

The changes will be accommodated into BN's constitution and officially declared at tomorrow's convention, which will be held at Dewan San Choon, Wisma MCA. This could create history and show that BN is not sparing any effort in winning back voters who had deserted the coalition in the March 2008 general election.

An Umno supreme council member said things had changed over the last three years and that support was back with BN.

"What's important is to show the people that BN is willing to make changes if that is what they want. We are listening to their voices."

The spirit of the BN convention, themed "1People, 1Nation, 1Vision, is to reshape and reinvent the coalition to satisfy the demands, aspirations and expectations of Malaysians, who have evolved to become more mature and are demanding more openness.

And BN leaders have accepted that the coalition must be more inclusive, attractive and vibrant to win the hearts and minds of people, particularly the exceptionally large number of young people who are eligible voters in the next general election.